



The Big Blue Box Ltd

Evaluation And Expectations

I was recently asked *'How do you measure your success?'*

The obvious answer seemed to be something like – *how much the business had billed in a period, or how much profit it had made.*

But when I thought about it, my actual measures of my success were quite different.

Billing and Profit are essential, but they are not the reasons why I work or what get me out of bed in the morning. I don't actually measure my 'money' at the end of the day, I don't get a good feeling from a client when I talk to them about money, they are not measuring my success in terms of money and if they were it would be in the minimisation of it, not in its maximisation – so we would be unlikely to agree about it anyway!

I had to look for measure of success in other areas and in other ways, and I realised that my measures of success were very diverse.

I measured whether I had had a good conversation – did it feel good to me and / or to the client? Did the client get something out of it – was their immediate feedback genuine and positive? I measured my To Do list – had I move things on, had I completed something, had part of a bigger project been completed, could I tick off a stage or step along the way? Had I done the important thing for that day? Had I done all those things that somebody else might be waiting for? Had I managed others' expectations? And so on.

I found I was suddenly able to recognise numerous measures of success. The list of measures of success was extensive and interrelated; whilst some elements were 'long term' it was achievable in part every day. It was varied in scale and scope and direction and in the benefit or quality that success was measured in. And some measures required knowledge of the impact for other people – my stakeholders. And they were often Win / Win measures.

This was informative when considering coaching and how to measure its success and to evaluate it.

In a coaching brief I have sometimes been presented with a defined requirement, often a narrowly defined – targeted - objective that the coaching is expected to deliver. Sometimes these 'given objectives' are a prejudgement of the solution. In other words; a successful outcome will be achieved if....

At the other extreme I have clients who are so enthusiastic about coaching that they treat it as a 'gift' to their people, knowing and trusting that it will produce an outcome, unconcerned about giving a defined expectation.

Assuming that Coaching is the appropriate method for addressing an individual's development, then the evaluation of coaching should consider several points:

Coaching is a powerful and effective tool; its impact is as diverse as the people who benefit from it.

Any measures of its impact need to reflect that individuality, breadth, variability and timing.

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Registered in England No: 4401635

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There may be clearly defined issues to be addressed. However the outcomes of a coaching project are not predictable, and when changes do occur, they are seldom confined to one area.

A narrow definition of success is potentially inappropriate – changes can be substantial, wide in their scope and impact, variable in their timing, and surprising!

So my initial advice when considering evaluation of coaching:

- Coaching will have an impact, but it may not be the outcome you expect.
- Even if expectations are narrowly defined, outcomes should be measured 'widely'.